

Chairman's Report–Annual Meeting 2016

This is my report on the activity of Hasketon Parish Council over the year 2015/2016. I apologise for not being here in person to give this report due to a diary mix up and hope you will forgive me for that.

Firstly I want to thank all the members of the Parish Council for their service over the last year. You have all given of your time freely and have done much behind the scenes to improve the quality of life of the people who live in our village. You have, by your contributions, made my role as Chairman very much easier. I would also like to publicly thank Isabel Clark, our Parish Clerk, for all her efforts over the last year. She worries for us, cajoles us, prompts us and generally keeps us all in order and on time with our responses to consultations and planning applications. I know it can be a thankless task which is why I want to redress that with these thanks which I know are echoed by other members of the council.

During the year we said goodbye to Councillor Samantha Wells who left to go travelling before attending university. She is currently sunning herself on a Greek Island and I'm sure we wish her well (despite feeling jealous!) She is going to read English at Sussex University in September. We were also pleased to welcome Sarah Butters to the Council after being "prevailed upon" to join. Sarah brings a huge range of skills and local knowledge to the table. This adds to the already wide breadth of skills and knowledge with which the Council is well blessed.

Sadly in the last month we have lost our long serving county councillor Peter Bellfield. Peter was a very active county councillor before his illness and when he attended our January meeting we were not aware how ill he was. Our thoughts go out to his family.

During the year I believe we have improved the service we give to the community. We have not raised the precept. We have lived within our budget and have healthy reserves. The village is looking as pretty as it has ever done and now has a working pub/restaurant which is again providing a focal point for village activities. Members may not know, for example, that Sarah has set up a very successful knitting group, 'Busy Hands, Warm Hearts' which meets weekly in the Turks Head.

Some of the things we have done (or decided not to do) are listed below:

We considered long and hard whether to go through the process of creating a neighbourhood plan. We decided in the end not to go ahead with it on the basis that the complexity of the process outweighed the possible benefits. A recent case in Sussex where a planning inspector on appeal over-ruled the neighbourhood plan seems to validate that view.

We consulted on the phone box in the village which had been out of order for a considerable period – and after much work by the Parish Clerk - got BT to remove it and make good the area.

Councillor Paul Strugnell, on behalf of the Parish Council, accepted a Tithe map of the parish from 1842 which had been purchased at a local auction by a village resident who wished to remain anonymous. The map is in excellent condition and through the skill of Councillor Simon Batley it was photographed to a professional standard and prints were purchased - printed on special paper. One copy was framed and is now on display in the Village Hall. Another copy is now on permanent loan to the Turks Head Public House. With the permission of the donor the original map has now been lodged with the county records office.

At July's meeting in 2015 Councillor Paul Strugnell raised the issue of the Drummer boy statue which resides outside Suffolk Coastal District Council's Offices in Melton Road. He asked our new district councillor where it was to be resited after the council moved its offices. This set in train a chain of events which resulted in a vote among the residents of Woodbridge as to where it should be relocated. Their decision was to move it to Market Hill.

Councillor Iain Whyte successfully transitioned the Parish Council website to the One Suffolk Platform, which he describes as basic and somewhat clunky to update. The website was populated during the year and is now available to all. Iain has also liaised with the Village Hall Committee, a role which may prove even more vital as they come to terms with the sad death of their Chairman John Nash and seek to find a successor.

Councillor Phil Hunter has explored the footpaths of the parish during the year and even carried out maintenance on them himself when necessary as well as ensuring that they are clearly marked. He has also ensured that the trees we are responsible for are surveyed and trimmed to keep them safe.

The playground has been well maintained over the year under the watchful eye of Councillor Simon Batley. The saga of the goalposts on the recreational area/ occasional car-park was finally laid to rest with their transfer into the enclosed play area. However this opened a new challenge as the ground in front of the goal quickly became worn and puddled when it rained. Work has been going on getting estimates for replacing the goalmouth with Astroturf this will be discussed at the meeting this evening.

The long-running saga of modernising the slide will also hopefully come to conclusion soon!

Both the Clerk and Councillor Sarah Butters have been working towards synchronising the contracts for the allotments and also to sort out some of the sub-letting which appears to be going on. Proposals will be brought forward after a meeting with the allotment holders to find out their views and to discuss water supply. I am aware that Isabel has done a huge amount of work on researching the contracts and thank her for that. Isabel also organised the two litter picking events which have taken place in the last year. The roads around

Hasketon look much tidier for it and we can all now testify that people who consume energy drinks don't take their litter home!

The finances of the Parish Council remain in a healthy state and I wish to thank Councillor Andrew Nightingale for his support of our parish clerk in presenting the finances in a much clearer way which makes it easy for all to understand and gives the transparency which we are required to have as a public body. I know Isabel really appreciates the support he gives her.

We have sought support from the County Council for the introduction of a 40 mile an hour speed limit on the B1079 as it passes through the parish. We had the support of the late Peter Bellfield and he had asked for a full report from the highways engineer responsible for this area. We do not know if that was ever delivered. I will be writing to the portfolio holder for highways to ask if it has been produced and seek his support for the introduction of an appropriate speed limit.

Finally I should mention the work of the council in scrutinising planning applications from within the parish. We look at each one in some detail and while there is rarely a major issue we ensure that our comments are added to the information that the planning committee takes into account while making their decision. Councillor Simon Batley takes a leading role in this and I thank him for that.

Overall I believe it has been a very good year for the Parish Council and the Parish and as your Chairman for the last year – I sincerely hope it continues.